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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CFK CRITICIZES PRESIDENT OBAMA DAYS BEFORE MEETING SECRETARY CLINTON; 2/26/10; BUENOS AIRES

SUMMARY

¶1. Argentine President Cristina Kirchner's "critical" interview with CNN and her "photo opportunity" with Secretary Clinton made headlines in all newspapers. Most highlighted Kirchner's comments that President Obama failed "to meet Latin American expectations" and that she disapproved of the way the U.S. handled the Honduran coup. Argentina's largest daily claimed Kirchner's remarks "reflect much what other Latin American presidents are thinking." Newspapers also covered expectations surrounding the meeting between Kirchner and Clinton on March 1, noting that there is barely time for much more than "a photo and greetings." End summary.

¶2. Ana Baron, largest daily Clarin's Washington correspondent, focused on President Kirchner's quote that President Obama "did not meet Latin America's expectations" and also on his weakness towards dealing with the coup in Honduras. Baron believes Kirchner's statements "reflect much what other Latin American presidents are thinking in private." While Baron also points out that the "timing" of the interview is "calling much attention," Baron notes that when Kirchner gave the interview, the Argentine Embassy in the U.S. already knew that "Hilary had decided not to include Argentina" in her South American trip in March 2010. In fact, Baron labels the meeting between Secretary Clinton and Kirchner on March 1 as "simply a photo opportunity."

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/02/26/elpais/p-02147938.htm>

¶3. Second-largest daily La Nacion stated that Kirchner's "focus of complaints" was the "U.S. conduct during the Honduras crisis." According to "high-level officials and diplomats" speaking to La Nacion, Kirchner planned to "bring these words to her meeting with Hilary Clinton," while the article also quotes a separate "high official" saying that Kirchner "did not say anything that has not been said before." Regarding Secretary Clinton's trip to the region in March, the article points out that it was "never in her plans" to "step foot in Argentina" and that Argentine diplomats "did not ignore" the fact that Kirchner's statements came "barely days before a face-to-face meeting" with Secretary Clinton.

http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1_237368

¶4. Headlining the article that Secretary Clinton "will only have time for a photo" with President Kirchner, La Nacion's U.S. correspondent, Silvia Pisani, comments that Clinton "traveling to three neighboring countries without stepping foot in Argentina" is a "faithful thermometer" of a bi-lateral relationship. Pisani

points out that the U.S. is following "diplomatic practice," as not having a meeting would be worse. Nonetheless, the meeting could not last "much more than five minutes," which is typically how long it takes "to take a photo, greet, and little more." In fact, Pisani observes that diplomatic sources say that the meeting is scheduled for 1:45pm, but yet at 1:55pm, Uruguayan President-elect Mujica will enter the stage, which is when "all guests are supposed to be seated."

http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1_237372

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